

## PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

### **Fact Sheet**

### **National Register Nomination for the Fulton Mall**

*Prepared 3.2010 by Karana Hattersley-Drayton, Historic Preservation Project Manager*

*The 6-block Fresno Fulton Mall has been nominated by the Downtown Fresno Coalition to the National Register of Historic Places. The following attempts to answer many of the questions posed by property owners and the public, regarding the benefits and constraints of listing.*

#### **What is the National Register of Historic Places?**

*The National Register of Historic Places was established by the United States Congress in 1966. It is considered an “authoritative guide” for the identification of the Nation’s cultural resources. There are 28 buildings in Fresno on the National Register.*

#### **What is the History of the Fulton Mall?**

*The Fulton Mall is a pedestrian Mall and urban park in downtown Fresno and was developed in 1964. It is six blocks in length (with three partial cross streets) and was designed by Garrett Eckbo for Victor Gruen and Associates, as the intended centerpiece for a transformation of Fresno’s downtown area.*

#### **Why Was It Nominated for Historic Status? What were the Criteria for the Nomination?**

*The Fresno Fulton Mall was nominated under Criterion C of the National Register with the theme of Landscape Architecture as:*

- 1) the finest example of pedestrian mall design from the 1960s; 2) as a major achievement of Garrett Eckbo, one of the leading landscape architects of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; and 3) as an excellent example of Modernist (post-World War II) design.*

*It was also nominated under Criterion A, under the theme Recreation and Social History as an urban park and open space. Because the Mall is less than 50 years of age it must also meet the threshold under Criteria Consideration G, as a property of “exceptional importance.” To prove this, it is imperative to provide comparative analysis with other pedestrian malls and landscape designs.*

#### **Who Prepared the National Register Nomination?**

*The nomination of the Fulton Mall was prepared by the Downtown Fresno Coalition, a private consortium.*

#### **Why Should Folks Care About This Nomination Anyway?**

*The Fulton Mall is a public space, held in trust by the City for the approximately 480,000 citizens of Fresno. In addition, the adjacent property owners along the Mall actually own the land “in fee” to the centerline. Property owners may be concerned about the impacts (positive or negative) which designation will have on their own interests.*

### **What Are My Rights as a Property Owner?**

*All property owners adjacent to the Mall should have received a mailing from the California State Office of Historic Preservation. Every individual owner is entitled to one vote, regardless of how many people own a particular property, or how many buildings an individual owns. If a property owner favors the nomination, no official response is required. If a property owner objects, he/she must submit a notarized statement verifying their ownership and stating his/her objection. If a majority of private property owners object, the property may not be listed.*

### **What are the Benefits of Being Listed on the National Register?**

- *For buildings, historic designation allows use of the California Historical Building Code, which provides greater flexibility in meeting health and safety requirements.*
- *Property values normally are increased for historic properties.*
- *Historic sites are important in heritage and cultural tourism.*
- *National Register properties are eligible for special grants and funds.*
- *A designated historic property is protected under local and state law.*

### **What are the Constraints of Listing?**

- *As a historical resource under CEQA (the California Environmental Quality Act), more procedures would be required to make significant changes to the Mall.*
- *All projects on or adjacent to the Mall would have to consider the potential for impact to the historical resource. Although heightened review would be required under CEQA, an EIR (Environmental Impact Report) would not necessarily be required for an individual project. Currently, the City is preparing a Specific Plan for the area that will include an EIR which analyzes the environmental impacts of any proposed changes.*

### **What Changes Would Be Allowed if the Mall Was Designated?**

- *Generally, historic properties must use the Secretary of Interior's Standards, which are a set of best-practice guidelines. Normally one repairs or replaces in kind, but some more dramatic changes are also possible, as with the removal of an early addition to the Santa Fe Depot.*
- *Examples: a form of transit that does not require substantial alternations to the Mall would not trigger the need for an EIR; altering the Mall to accommodate auto traffic would likely require an EIR (or inclusion in the Specific Plan EIR).*

### **How Would NR Designation for the Mall Affect the Buildings Along the Mall?**

- *Designation of the Mall would NOT extend to the buildings that line the Mall, only the urban park, its landscape features and infrastructure.*
- *It is unlikely that a rehabilitation project of a particular building would be affected.*
- *It is unclear whether a designation that would encourage keeping the pedestrian mall intact would negatively impact buildings on the mall by contributing to higher vacancy rates and discouraging rehabilitation and reuse.*

### **What are the Economic Impacts to Downtown Development?**

- *The question of economic impacts is complex and multifaceted: How have pedestrian malls fared throughout the United States? Why is the Fulton Mall not economically successful now and how do we define "success."*
- *Are there compromise solutions that could allow listing and economic viability?*

**What Happens Next?**

*On Monday, April 5<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 PM the City of Fresno's Historic Preservation Commission will hold a special meeting in the Council Chambers (2600 Fresno Street) to consider whether the Mall meets the criteria for listing on the National Register. The nomination of the Fulton Mall to the National Register is slated for consideration by the State Historical Resources Commission at its April 30<sup>th</sup> public hearing in Sacramento.*

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